

My fondest childhood memories include breakfasts with my grandparents in Chicago. Very early in the morning, the smell of coffee would wake me from my sleep. I could hear her soft slippers padding across the floor as my grandmother prepared for the cooking and baking of the day.

I slept in the bedroom just off the kitchen. I listened to Grandma conversing quietly with my grandfather or humming softly with the radio. I would doze off now and then, enjoying the softness of my father's old bed and wondering whether he had allowed the noises of Grandma's kitchen to pull him out of sleep each morning when he was a child.

Soon, I would trot into the kitchen. Grandma would greet me with a "Good Morning!" and a strong hug.

"What can I fix you for breakfast?" she would ask, even though she knew I would order eggs, my favorite breakfast. "How about a little sausage, too?"

"Sure!"

"And some toast to go with those eggs?" she would offer. She knew I liked to soak the runny yolk of my eggs "over easy" with toast. She would then fry the eggs in olive oil in a heavy iron skillet while my grandfather poured me a cup of coffee. My mother did not exactly approve of the coffee because the caffeine would keep me awake, but Grandma and Grandpa would let me drink it when I visited them alone.

Grandpa would pour half milk and half coffee into my mug and then add about three or four teaspoons of sugar. Just the way he and I liked it.

"There we go," Grandma would sing as she placed a plate of sizzling eggs, spicy sausage links, and crunchy, buttered toast in front of me. She would watch with joy as I ate the breakfast she had prepared for me.

After I had soaked up the last bit of runny egg yolk into my toast and swallowed the last gulp of coffee, I would help Grandma wash dishes. I had to stand on a chair to reach the sink. I plunged my hands into the hot, sudsy water and scrubbed each dish carefully. Grandma would then nudge me with her elbow and say, "How about helping me make more ravioli today for your mom and dad when they come to pick you up?"

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